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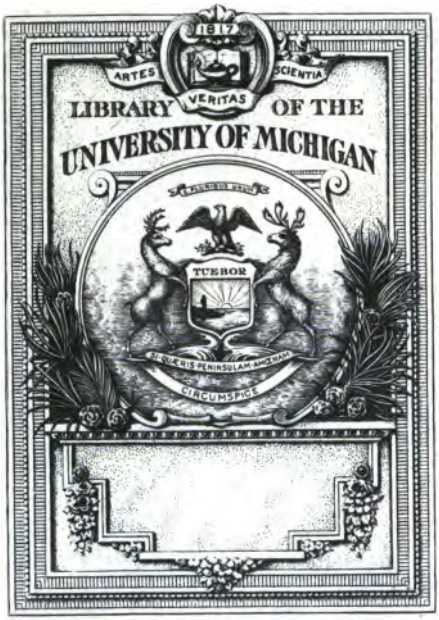

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IRVING KANE POND
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VISION OF WAR

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TORONTO

VISION OF WAR

BY

LINCOLN COLCORD

"I think all war through all time was really fought, and ever will be really fought, for thee!"

— WALT WHITMAN.

New York
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1915

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TO THE MEMORY OF

A MAN

JK Vond Bequest
1-16-40

VISION OF WAR

I

I

I WENT out into the night of quiet stars;
I looked up at the wheeling heavens, at the mysterious firmament;
I thought of the awful distances out there, of the incredible magnitudes, of space and silence and eternity;
I thought of man, his life, his love, his dream;
I thought of his body, how it is born and grows, and of his spirit that cannot be explained.

All about me slept the land in peace, and nature slept in deep serenity;
An off-shore wind had died at sunset, the bay was calm and golden as twilight fell;

Not a cloud broke the clear and tender blue of the evening sky.
Then the quiet stars came out, the air grew cool with the breath of night;
A land-breeze flurried, wafting the odor of damp woods and late hay-fields;
A gentle breeze, that scarcely turned the sleeping leaves.

I walked on through the village, I saw the lights go out in houses as men and women prepared for bed;
Safe and secure, the homes of my neighbors rested in the shadow of tall trees, that had been growing there peacefully a long time;
I passed on into the country, crickets were singing in the fields, fireflies were glimmering in the pastures among low growths of spruce and pine;
I mounted a hill, high overhead brooded the majestic and silent heavens;
On the eastern horizon a great bright star arose, casting a track across the bay.

I have never seen the world so calm, the air so clear and still;
I have never known an hour so full of quietness.

2

Hour of the War!
Now, now — and here — on this same earth, and under this same sky!
Now!—Now!—The War!—The War!—The War!

Night, and a sodden field, and starlight over all,
And on the ground the bodies of dead men lying;
Tumbled, broken, grotesque, in attitudes unhuman, in lumpish, swollen heaps, they lie,
Where death suddenly snatched them up and flung them down.

A strange, dark, silent scene;
Here passed the awful charge three days ago;
Here met the choking volley, shattered out and fell.

Three days and nights they have been lying here;
No help could reach them, cast between the battle lines;
No help is needed now.

Slowly above their heads the conflict wore itself away;
Calm settled on the shaking, riven air;
The sharp cries of the wounded stopped one by one, their groans grew fainter;

A few crawled off — the others lay as they had fallen,
under the sun and stars;
Then the third night, and peace at last, the quietness
restored.

3

Listen! — could one be living? — come this way;
Here where a score of bodies are drawn mysteriously
together,
A turning face catches a gleam of starlight,
A hand moves, winnowing the air.

"*Water!*" — No use, no use — too late;
His breast is shot away — don't move him — God,
how he bled!
What is it, comrade? A letter — make a light:
"*We have not heard since you left home. . . . I cannot
bear it. . . .*"
Turn the sheet over: — "*Oh, my dear, be careful!*"
Here is the signature — the address — a distant
village;
I have been there — an ancient, quiet village of the
north,
Fronting the open sea.

Yes, comrade, I will write — he smiles:
To lie here, thinking, suffering, remembering;
To be left to die alone!

4

But not alone:
Passing brother, you have yet a grim companion;
Along the edge of the thicket just now, as I went to the brook down there for water,
I stumbled over something that must have been left from the charge a week ago:
A body that held the remnants of a man.
He had dragged himself to the brook, he lay imbedded in tall waving grass;
His stomach had been ripped open by shrapnel, maggots were heaving in the wound;
(Did you know that a man could live while maggots formed in his flesh?)
His muscles twitched convulsively, he was barely conscious;
He did not notice the match I struck, his eyes were filmed over, he would not drink;
The region that he inhabited was an unknown, unimaginable land.

(At home, a woman waits for news of him:
It is well that she can never hear.)

5

5

Pass on, pass on! Behold the mobilization of armies;
The men leaving their work at the counter and factory,
dropping the plow where it stands in the field,
Flocking together, filling the towns, saying good-by to
wife and children, taking a last look around;
(*Our country calls! Our country, and our King!*)

Behold the flinging forward of nations in the wake of
armies;
The marvellous, massive engines, the enormous para-
phernalia;
The powerful mechanical conveyances, the long lines
of them carrying supplies;
The immense stores of provisions at the depot, the
stacks of clothing and other necessities, the huge
piles of fodder and grain for the horses;
The flaring illuminations, the sweating gangs working
beneath them, ceaselessly receiving, sorting, dis-
tributing;
The field guns, the heavy artillery, their ponderous
steady movements through the villages;
The stout-wheeled wagons full of dangerous, costly
ammunition;
The roaring trains, arriving and departing, some laden

with supplies, some packed with humanity, alive or dead;
The vast and systematic commissariat, the grist of war.

6

Behold the columns, advancing, advancing, advancing;
Tramping steadily onward, seen behind on the hills, and seen ahead to the distant turn of the road;
Streaming along the valleys, gaining and crossing the passes, flanking the mountain ranges, netting the land with a lethal web;
Accoutrements flashing and jangling, thunder of tread, regular motion swaying and undulating the lines;
Countless miles of indomitable marching men;
(*Our country calls! Our country, and our King!*)

Behold the front, the million-manned intrenchments, continent-spanning;
The infinite detail of day-works and night-works;
The burrowing, roofing, screening, the placing of barbed-wire entanglements;
The stealthy advance in the darkness, the hasty and desperate digging-in under fire;
The shifting and rushing forward of artillery, the lashing of horses, the running of wires for communication;

The searchlights feeling afar through the night, like cold white fingers;
The life of the trenches, after all is completed;
The hidden underground chambers, the well-concealed passages, the bomb-proof quarters;
The men laughing and singing, some of them making music on simple instruments, some playing cards, some smoking and talking;
Passing backwards and forwards, eating, sleeping, fighting, or taking their leisure, all out of sight, in tunnels and cavities below the surface:
A serious new game for earnest, grown-up children.

(Hark, hark! Aloft — look up;
A great bird sails across the sky, with loud and strident whirr of wings;
Terribly swift — a moment — it is gone.
Can men be passing there on high, so swiftly through the air?)

7

Pass on! Behold the charge;
(*Ready! Run low! Run wide!*
Our country calls! Our country, and our King!)

8

Over the open fields, trampling the crops, dropping to fire, rising to run;
(Some never rising, never again to rise;)
Straggling, thinning, wavering, (God, it is hopeless! — it is too much!)
Onward, onward pressing, rushing and driving onward;
(I did not know that men could be so reckless and brave!)
Mounting the opposite slope, cutting their way through entanglements;
Gaining the outer trenches, (deadly work for the bayonets!)
Shouting, cursing, groaning, stabbing, wrestling, clubbing with butts, fighting at last with bare fists;
Annihilating the enemy, capturing the position!
(*Victory! Victory! Victory!*
Our country calls! Our country, and our King!)

(On the open field lie many huddled shapes;
The wounded are stirring feebly out there, like men awaking from a violent dream;
They lift their heads, they stretch their arms, they struggle to rise on their elbows;
They sit up, staring around — they crawl like snails among the crops;

A screaming horse dashes athwart the line, dragging his entrails on the ground.)

8

Behold the ships at sea;
A long and weary time they had been waiting, constantly on the alert, nerves strained to breaking;
In smothering, foggy weather, in gloomy days, in pitch-black nights, in wild and desperate gales;
Anxious for battle, longing to sight the enemy, every one on the lookout, chafing and growling;
Anything, anything, boys, to end this tedious monotony!
(Maybe an unseen deliverer is at hand.)

The captain was walking the bridge that morning, the crew were at breakfast, the navigating officer was winding his chronometers;
Suddenly, from forward, a frantic cry! A man runs aft, pointing to windward;
The captain whips out his glasses, scans the horizon;
For a while, he does not pick up a little white streak on the water, not very far away, drawing rapidly nearer;
A streak like the wake of a shark's fin, cutting along on the weather bow.

He sees it! Quick, to the signal! *Stop! Full speed astern!*
Over, there, with the helm!

Too late, too late, captain of ship and lives;
Away from the little wake springs a broader wake;
A murderous fish drives straight towards you, churning the water as he goes.
Close compartment doors! — the last command;
Then to the end of the bridge, and stand there waiting;
Press tight the lips, fold the arms on the breast, throw back the head:
Below, along the weather rail, a line of men stands silently, watching death come;
(*Our country calls! Our country, and our King!*)

A whitish object skims on the surface of the blue sea;
The torpedo strikes below the magazine;
The ship is instantly blown in two — she sinks like lead;
A faint cheer finds no listener but God.
A few men struggle on the water, where she went down;
They cling for a while to fragments of wreckage;
There is no help in sight — they cannot be saved.

(Down in the close, tight shell — in the unseen, mysterious vessel,

Crouching in a dim chamber, in utter silence, wrapped in impenetrable privacy, apart from life, cut off from world of land and sea,
A man sits, breathing hard, clenching his hands;
Far above him, where sunlight strikes on breaking wave, a secret eye looks out,
A secret mirror throws down to him the story there;
One long, intense, absorbing glance — then to the signal stretches out his hand;
Turning away, as darkly as she came, the submarine speeds homeward,
Leaving the sea to seal her work and bury her dead.)

9

Behold! Hour of the War!
Life everywhere flowing in strange new channels!
The world aroused, awakened! The silence rent! Peace shattered and overthrown!
The well-ordered conventions rudely broken up! The illusions dissipated! The motives suddenly disclosed!
Men face to face with nature, death, and pain! The elemental shown! And dim and far, the truth appearing!
The hovering dream! The distant and divine conception!

(I sing no battles lost, retreating armies:
O, I tell you, in this campaign there are no defeats!
O, I tell you, the retreating and advancing armies are equally triumphant!
O, I tell you, the lost battles contribute as much as the battles won, to the sure result of this campaign!
Victory! Victory! Victory!
Our country calls! Our country, and our King!)

10

While about me sleeps the land in peace, while men and women prepare for bed;
While the land-breeze flurries, wafting a scent of autumn woods and fallen leaves;
While the crickets sing in the fields, and fireflies glimmer among low spruce and pine;
While the bright star rises, casting a track across the bay;
While the majestic heavens wheel onward, overlooking space and time;
While the still air drops down its quietness like love.

II

I

I HAVE read in the old books,
How out of German forests, centuries ago, burst the hordes of barbarians,
Shouting, singing, carousing, lustful and lawless,
Believing supremely in themselves, knowing no other or better,
Mighty and terrible children, clear-eyed, clean-blooded, yellow-haired,
Arrayed in coarse garments, loving crude colors,
Bedecked with rough ornaments of turquoise and emerald and beaten gold:
How, emerging, crossing the frontier rivers,
Brave, ignorant, reckless, never admitting defeat,
They descended upon the Roman legions in endless and irresistible armies of great strong men.

A civilization fell before them;
Rome withered, the firm and visible structure of the world was swept away;

Thus passed a day already stretched too long — night intervened;
A new day dawned, bright with a higher dream, and warm with a new love.

2

The Roman stood aghast;
To him we were a dream beyond a dream;
(But now there are no Romans left, to sigh and wonder;
And no one left to mourn the fall of Rome.)

And Rome lives on;
All that was spiritual, ideal, the essence of Rome's vanished splendor,
Is part of us to-day, inherited with our spirit and our blood.

(What people comes, O Future, emerging, conquering, believing supremely in itself?
What people overthrowing all that has been established? — possessing itself of the firm and visible structure of the world which now is ours?
What people bearing within its spirit the seed of better and truer institutions — though we stand aghast, though to us it is a dream beyond a dream?

I think that people dwells across the last frontiers,
in the fastnesses of undiscovered lands;
I think we have not met the barbarian ancestors of
that people:
I think we will not know them, when they appear.)

3

To-day, along the old frontiers of Rome, the battle
closes;
Germans invade a German land, Germans defend it;
Germans with Germans join to strike at Germans;
Hour of the War! Civil War of the Western World!

Why? — Why?
Ah, God, on either side! — Ah, Christ, attacking and
defending! — *Why?*

See there, how brother grips with brother!
See how they fall, pulling each other down!
Nations at war! The State to be supported!
Lands loved, and lands despised! Lines drawn!
On one side, every last man looking east — on the
other side, every last man looking west!
Whole peoples aflame with absolutely opposite ideas!
Different as black from white, yet all the same, all
ordinary, average men!
(*Our country calls! Our country, and our King!*)

4

"Brother, lay down your arms!" I cried; and,
"Brother, lay down your arms!"

I looked up at the quiet, watchful stars;
Above me passed a whisper, louder and louder swelling;
The sighing of the souls of the slain in battle,
Telling triumphant news.

"Take heart, take heart, my brother;
"Search out the truth — know what is true.

"See where you stand, halfway between the past and the future;
"Nothing ultimate yet, nothing entirely won.

"Look up! Behold the far, high, future dream!
"Behold the truth! Know what is true!"

5

Out of my aching heart I cried, "Oh God, shall these things ever come again?
"Shall not men throw away their arms, and live in peace?"

Answered the resolute whisper: — "*Not to-day;*
"*God shows on every hand that it would not be wise.*

"*Take heart, take heart, my brother;*
"*High truth appears in stern, unwelcome guise.*
"*Stand out. Stand face-to-face. Turn not aside.*
"*Behold the truth. Know what is true.*"

All night I sat beneath the quiet, watchful stars,
Thinking of man, his life, his love, his dream:
Thinking of War.

III

1

STRIKE at the root, swing high and wide, put out every ounce of strength;
Follow this rotten streak to its last lead;
Uncover what it means.

What can it mean, apart from the meaning of life?
Then first determine what life itself is for;
Is life for contentment, pleasure, happiness, ease, the things of the body?
Is life for these things first of all?
Is life for peace primarily, and incidentally for truth?
Is life primarily for the body, and incidentally for the soul?

2

Out of the shadow of the past, bearing onward the spark,
Torch of the spirit, consciousness and faith,
Issuing forth, erect, wide-browed, clear-eyed, majestically formed, supremely gifted,

Man stands above the hideous war of nature,
The savage fray, the grinding, ruthless slaughter,
The crawling shapes, the dripping maws, the frantic
lusts, the insatiable gross appetites,
The struggle for existence, the continuing strong force,
Lighting the scene, shedding illumination and meaning,
Holding aloft the radiant lamp of the ideal,
Promise of perfect love.

3

All truth rests in the spirit;
Whatever exalts the spirit, is worthy — whatever debases the spirit, is unworthy;
All for the spirit, all for ideals, all for truth,
And all of these for perfect love.

Else the light false, no meaning shining forth;
The darkness truer and better;
The sooner it is all over, the truer and better;
Oblivion the end.

IV

I

SPIRIT exalted!
Come now, old man, get down to grips with life and God.

Why should you look upon war from the hospital-side, any more than you look upon life from the hospital-side?
I do not see where men are anywhere living forever — so we can reckon death out of the question;
Few of them will die without pain — few of them will die without giving sorrow;
The hardships and privations are mostly imagined at home — you do not hear the soldier complaining of them;
Many a pioneer has stood a lot more from choice, and called it good.

The surgeon will tell you that war to-day is more horrible than ever before;
He will tell you that it is too much — that it is more than men can bear;

But who would take a physician's view of life?
I would rather hear from some of the men who are doing the suffering;
Do they find it too much? — do they find it more than men can bear?
How is it, then, that they all are eager to go to the front again, as soon as their wounds are healed?

Reckon the body altogether out, and everything that pertains to the body;
Look to the spirit, see where the spirit stands.

2

Who is crying that war makes brutes of men?
Who is shuddering there at home, wringing his hands,
Sick with horror and fear, screaming the spirit fallen,
Lost in the quick-loosed elemental, the flimsy framework falling about his head?

Nothing vital or necessary to the spirit is disturbed by war;
The earth remains, the trenches can easily be filled up;
Seed will continue to germinate and grow;
The stock for shelter and clothing will continue to grow;
The sun will continue to shine, the rain will continue to fall;

Spring will continue to follow winter, summer to follow spring;
Man will continue to exist, loving, begetting, serving, aspiring;
Safe in the arms of invulnerable nature, possessor of spirit and dream.

Only the intricate web of convention, the artificial fabric, is disturbed by war;
Only the financial and fiscal structure is shaken;
Only commercial bonds are loosened and broken;
Only materials are destroyed.
These can be quickly replaced with better stuff;
The bonds cemented again with a sweeter mixture;
The structure rebuilt on finer, grander, truer lines.

3

Let nothing be sacred or inviolate but the spirit;
Turn the materials over and over;
Build, and tear down, and build again.

(The foundation is stronger than you know, massive and beautiful;
Standing eternal, ever ready for newer and newer structures;

Ready at last for the supreme structure of perfect love.)

Material is impermanent;
Clay for the hands of the spirit, shaped to be broken;
(And always finer, grander, truer forms!)

The spirit, intangible and inconceivable, the only permanence;
Mould and copy of truth, pose of divinity, God Himself revealed;
Passionate, inextinguishable dream;
Promise of everlasting peace, and immortality.

4

Spirit fallen? The spirit is not what you think or mean;
The spirit is a force constantly ready for battle, quick to fight for its own,
Free with itself, careless of consequences, violent, charged with faith, indifferent to protests and arguments,
Intent alone on truth, its deathless dream.

Spirit exalted! Above the armies of men in battle it hovers, valorous, undefiled;

There, on the field of carnage and death, stand forth
the highest instincts of the soul;
There find ye courage, strength, nobility, ungrudging
service;
There find ye infinite tenderness and compassion, the
generosity of worthy foemen;
There find the purest instances of friendship and
humanity;
There neither lies nor lying thoughts nor base sus-
picions;
There honor honored, truth believed;
There miracles of faith made manifest;
There souls' coöperation, pain subdued for others'
sake, and for the cause;
There nothing held back, the last gift freely given;
There spirit's power supremely shown, rising to greater
and greater sacrifices;
There marvels, too, of bodily strength, endurance,
health, the body supremely shown;
(For the body is only supreme where the spirit is
supreme;)
There life stripped to its fundamentals, seen at last,
in the cold and hunger and wet, in the pain, in
the presence and hour of death;
All simple, wise, heroic, natural, true.

There near-appearing, the dream that stood far off in
times of peace;
Love without bound, love compassing the enemy and
friend alike;
Unselfish love, a flash of the ideal;
Love of humanity — the Brotherhood of Man!

5

There no illusions about the body, no sorrowing or
regret;
The body seen in its true place, and given its just due.

(Hustle it off, bury it quick, dig a shallow hole;
Dust to dust — it will help the next year's crops;
No time for foolish ceremonies, no ammunition to
spare for a parting volley;
It is only death — the man is done with his body
now — it is no more use to him or any one else;
It was never very important — not half so important
as he himself imagined;
Now it is the least important thing in the world.)

6

There no mistakes about the spirit;
The spirit alone esteemed, the man appraised by his
spirit;
All trappings, treasures, accruements, cleared away.

—He was a noble fellow, simple, loyal, brave, good-natured,
Unlearned and unsophisticated, ardent, devoted, lively, prodigal;
At twenty-one, in perfect health, finely and cleanly formed, in love with a strong girl, owning a little farm in a pleasant valley;
A member of an affectionate family, father and mother both living, two sisters and a younger brother;
(Many the time he has told me all about them!)
Life calling sweet, the future bright, with everything to live for,
He gave his life without a thought to carry a drink of water to a dying man that he had never seen before.

—A mean whelp, that — who would have credited it?
I knew him well at home, always considered him a decent fellow;
He lived in faultless style, entertained hospitably, had good manners, showed a catholic taste, was all the gentleman,
Very successful, a power in affairs and in society:
I never realized that he was a coward — he never had to defend himself;

I never realized that he was a selfish hog — he had
everything that he wanted;
I never realized that he would lie, and cheat, and
oppress his subordinates — his position covered
such things up:
Now, in the open, in hardship, in physical distress, I
have seen him as he is;
And I see now, thinking it over out here, that he came
dishonestly by the money that sustained his life;
And I see that society measured him by his money,
and not by his soul.

—He knew there was no chance — the captain called
for a man to go to certain death;
He had no comrade, even — he went out alone;
Did you see him when he stepped forward? — there
was something strange and bright on his face;
Something that made me catch my breath, and turn
away;
His task has been accomplished — we are saved;
All night he did not come, and now all day — I wonder
where he lies:
This was the man we used to laugh at, because he was
serious and small.

—Look at that overgrown baby, blubbering at a cut
finger;

I suppose it hurts, but what of it? — his hip is broken
— I wish it was his neck;
What a row he makes — for God's sake, choke him
off, or take him away;
Wouldn't you think a man with a body like that,
would have some sand in his guts?
A perfect physique — he was fond enough of showing
his strength, he was everlastingly talking about it;
He could do some wonderful things, too — the strongest
man I ever saw:
But God deliver us from these blatant lumps of flesh;
Look behind the muscle, when there is work to do;
Look beyond the body, when there is pain to bear.

7

Spirit exalted! Behold the home-lands, with single
thought and single labor;
All eyes towards the front, all hearts unlocked, and
every hand held out;
Brave eyes, and resolute hearts, and tireless hands.

We bore them long ago, we watched their years;
They lie on other fields than those they tilled;
We loved them well — we would that there were more;
Our country calls! Our country, and our King!

V

I

Know that life is not so important as the truth that life is not important;
Know that to live is not so important as to die.

Know that there is such a thing as the life of truth, apart and distinct from the life of man;
And that the death of a life representing truth, contributes to the life of truth;
And that the death of a life representing falsehood, amends the life of truth;
And that if lives representing falsehood gain the majority, it is amending the life of truth to kill the majority;
And that if the minority lose their lives in the work, the life of truth is all the stronger for it:
For the life of truth is the life of the immortal spirit;
The living God, source of all forms of life and growth, the cause and meaning of the world.

O God of life and truth, give us a dream to fight for!
Love, honor, faith, to suffer and to die for!
For only our bodies fight and suffer and die:
Our souls, our souls, reach on!

2

Life is chiefly a preparation for death;
We learn the chiefest truth of life through the death of those we love;
We are living chiefly so that in our death, we may teach some truth to those we love;
All is summed in the hour of death, all truth revealed, all falsehood bared;
The spirit standing naked forth, like a runner prepared for a race,
Waiting the signal, poised on the start.

O how shall I send my soul to the line heart-whole and confident,
Alert, tiptoe with expectation, impatient of delay,
The muscles taut, the warm blood singing through the veins?
O how shall I send him forth in the lead, the first to get away,
Fearless, sound, and strong, fleetly and lightly covering the course, triumphant already,

Laughing aloud, glad to be free at last, glad of the chance to run?

(Happy the faithful watchers at the start!
O he is off! O he is in the lead! O never fear! Farewell, farewell!
In perfect faith, we now await our turn.)

3

Ah, runners of the soul! Ah, sad and awful race!
I see them halting, trembling, lagging at the line;
Maimed bodies, withered limbs, scant breath, blind eyes, corrupted blood,
Desperate, sick with fear, lost ere the start is given,
Waiting in agony,
Watching God sorrowfully hold the pistol up.

— I am not ready! — Stop! — I cannot run!
— How do I start? — Is it hard? — Is it long? — It cannot be true!
— Let me go back! — I never learned to run!

(Ah, but you must, you must. Down on your knees!
Away!
For this, you have been given life and years;

It cannot be helped or changed, the moment cannot be stayed.
Away! Away! Away!
Another race is forming on the line.)

4

I knew a man who had lived with the world, a prosperous life of peace;
He had won success, all men looked up to him, he seemed well satisfied;
Ideals had never bothered him — you would always have found him thinking with the crowd;
In the course of active years, he had managed to evade each call of outright truth with added honor and repute;
He had built his life on the platitudes that people love;
He had lived for himself, for his body — his body had been well paid;
He had overlooked his spirit — but he would need his spirit more than all.

He came to his bed in quiet times of peace, and was afraid to die;
He tossed, moaned, cried out, closed his eyes, then opened them and looked up dumbly at the ceiling of the room;

Over and over again he repeated: — "I don't know what to do!"
(There was nothing left for him to do — that was what frightened him;)
No word of hope or faith escaped his lips;
The room where he fought it out, grew terrible after a time,
The air oppressed with loneliness and tragedy,
The message unavailing, truth all lost and gone, nothing but gloom, and bitter dread, and hollow, awful void.

This man, in youth, in a time when truth had swung in the balance, had lacked the courage to go to war.

5

I knew a man who, in times of peace, refused to live with the world;
He struggled, raged, struck out, (often blindly, sometimes unjustly,) always fighting, truth in his heart,
Making a war of life, ready at any moment to die for what he believed,
Scorning the least peaceful and advantageous compromise.
He was feared and disliked, he openly spoke the word that gave the hypocrites dead away;

He was loved as only such men are loved, by those who were great enough to see his truth;
He loved outrightly in return, he hated vehemently, there was nothing halfway about him;
Imperious, quick-spoken, he said no wrong which he did not later frankly repudiate;
Impulsive, positive, the act upon the thought, he did no wrong of which he did not later repent in pitiless self-abasement;
He applied to others his own rigorous measure — he judged, and was willing to be judged;
He cleaned up his past from day to day, leaving nothing behind of which he might be ashamed;
His last concern was his body — the desires of his body, (and they were full,) were absolutely under his control;
What seemed to him true, he gratified, and what seemed false, he denied;
All of his currents set strongly and steadily into the ocean of his soul.

He died at the height of life, at the top of strength, at the loudest and clearest note of his message;
(He had always wanted to finish life that way;)
A long time he had seen the end approaching, and had said no word;

Clean and unafraid he came to his death;
In the air of his chamber appeared a wonderful truth, uplifting hearts;
A great voice shouted "Victory!" above his head;
His spirit, like an arrow released from the bow,
Mounted, gleamed on high, and was instantly among the stars.

6

Only in moments of mortality do we face the august truth, beholding God within us and around us;
Only in moments of mortality do we shake our fetters off, and rise entirely free.

(You loved him? — Look upon him lying dead;
Know that you never really loved him till this hour;
You did not know what real love meant, or how to love.
You will forget, your wings will fail, you will descend;
But moments of heart-stabbing memory will come, divine and keen;
Moments of consummated truth — and the consummation of truth is immortal stuff;
And the sum of the consummations of truth makes up the soul.)

7

Happy those who die on the field of battle!
Happy the souls that leap forth singing there!

Happy the day! Happy the watchful sky! Happy the dream fulfilled!
Happy the proud and loving God, Who waits with open arms!

VI

I

PEACE is the cry of the world, O let me be!
Peace is the cry of the body, O hurt me not!
Permit me to eat my fill, sleep, be warm and contented;
I wish that every one in the world were as happy as I am;
And I think that if every one had lived as well as I have, and worked as hard, he might be just as happy;
So let us have peace, and all will turn out well.

What ask you, Soul? Ask you these things?
(Tell me first if there are any wrongs to be righted;
Tell me if justice is everywhere accomplished;
Tell me if all men, rich and poor alike, are paid according to their just deserts;
Tell me if governments are performing works of brotherhood and love;
Tell me if parliaments are voting righteousness;
Tell me if citizens are intelligently supporting the righteousness;

Tell me if democracy is free and universal;
Tell me if greed, and selfishness, and insincerity, have vanished from the world;
For I am pledged beyond transgression to fight the fight of truth, in every time and place;
And until I look upon the face of truth enthroned, I may not rest or falter.)

2

A man sneered at me, saying, "Where are your wounds?" (He could not see my gaping wounds.)
My body is not yet broken — but I hold it ready;
I hold my body as fuel and food for true ideas;
I would be only too glad to fling my body to a ravening true idea.

Ah, ravening ideas! Ah, wolves of truth!
(I think that the divine truth now and then secretly and unaccountably impels men to fight each other,
Such times when dreams are failing, the spirit in danger, the light going out.)

3

Old man, you hold a wrong conception of this thing called war;
The actual fighting is not of the least importance;

The killing and being killed are not worth talking about;
The willingness to be killed is the only vital issue;
The spirit of war is its only argument.

Wherever men die for a cause, mistaken or not, misled or not, there truth advances, an imperceptible degree;
The result of the contest may not be what was intended — it may be utterly different from what was intended;
It probably will be — few wars have been brought about with righteous intent;
The conquering armies may come home to rend in their triumph the powers that sent them forth;
The conquered may finally emerge victorious, the principle they fought for, taken up by the opposite side;
(If I am to fight and die for my belief, I must have a sincere enemy on the opposite side.)

4

Noble and generous reconciliation!
I tell you, there is a chance, the only chance — it has been done;

The air has been cleared, the spirit shown, the impenetrable curtain fiercely ripped asunder;
The divine and majestic vision glimpsed momentarily, seen and remembered.

Show me another way to clear the air:
Peace, and soft words, and inconclusive arguments, and hopes betrayed, and promises unfulfilled?
Jealousies ripening round the wealth of nations?
Wrongs gathering round the nations' power?

(Let us have fighting, to the spirit's glory!
Let us have sharp, quick pain, instead of long-drawn pain.)

5

I tell you, suffer and bear, until you can bear no more;
Then rise, strike, kill and be killed:
When that time comes, I will be with you;
I will strike the first blow, and be the first one killed.

VII

I

In peace, the soul decays;
Belief, faith, thought, the aching youthful dreams,
divine and glorious aspirations,
The priceless original inheritance, the immortal increment,
All that makes up the life of truth, the spirit, the ideal,
Sinks languishing beneath a load of gross material.

Counting their treasures over, men make out their lives, beget their children,
Do well or ill, are happy or unhappy, all following convention's lead, all quite content with it,
Reckoning only their false inheritance,
Never approaching what they might have been.

Society, an artificial state, not natural yet, (it shall be!) nothing permanent;
Subject, like governments, to change as human nature changes;

(And changing always, surely, while men see it not;)
A state now, as it stands, making truth fight for justice, honor, right;
A state all-powerful, moulding the smallest act of ignorant and thoughtless life;
Championed by the press, sustained by public opinion, reverenced by the church:
This figment would cure men of war, give up the fight, live with the world,
Selling their souls for peace and ease and gain.

2

I say that if wars were to cease now, men would be meaner and weaker for it,
The spirit meaner and weaker than it has ever shown;
And I say that if it could possibly be brought about that this were to be the last war of all time, God would now be finally overthrown.

For I tell you, there are many bitter things to be done, before the truth shall appear;
There are many radical items to be added and subtracted, before the world is prepared to receive the truth.

3

Do you consider that man is worthy yet to live in peace?

Do you consider that the idea of true and perfect peace is yet a part of his nature?

I think that he would abuse peace — I think it is fairly evident that he would betray the privilege of peace;
I think that human nature pretty generally follows the channel of a false ambition,
Hankering after wealth, and power, and self-indulgence,
Kicking the soul aside.

4

Convention rules the average man — he refuses to reason himself clear;
Few men are great enough to break their souls' environment, the world's hard shell.

Convention sums a man altogether by his material state, neglects altogether his spiritual state,
A world turned upside-down;
What is at the bottom should be at the top, and what is at the top should be at the bottom;
Poverty is a worthy condition — it drives men back upon simplicity and love;
Wealth is an unworthy condition — it sets men free in human selfishness;

Nothing in life is so fine as labor, producing, serving, sustaining;
Nothing so mean as idleness, using, requiring, being sustained;
Nothing material has an intrinsic value;
Ideas are rarer than diamonds — love is finer than gold.

5

You say that life is bettered by peace;
You say that war is a human calamity?

But I do not see great measure of truth accruing to humanity, through all this peace;
I see, on one side, a good many people living in ease and physical freedom, which they have not rightly earned;
I see, on the other side, a good many people living in misery and physical bondage, which they have not rightly deserved;
And I see that those peace surfeits, are less worthy than those peace starves.

There is no betterment of life, except through increase of the spirit;
There is no human calamity, except through decrease of the spirit;

(And, where you stand, the spirit seems to fail in peace,
and be revived in war.)

6

O, sometimes it seems to me that after a time of peace,
men rush to war with gladness, hearts relieved to
live again!

O, to have done with this sad fraud! To throw aside
these chains! Be free, be free!

O, to do something natural once more! Forget the
hideous pressure of the world!

O, to escape the stifling air! To breathe the open!
To see the stars again!

O, to go out and die for an idea again!

VIII

1

Ye who think yourselves wise, shall perish through ignorance;
Ye who think yourselves benevolent, shall perish through greed;
Ye who think yourselves strong, shall perish through weakness;
Ye who think yourselves virtuous, shall perish through sin.

2

Take not opinion from the words of these;
Go to the founts of human nature in the average man, taste for yourself, judge for yourself;
Find there the ingredients of life, humanity, society, the world.

All movements, manifestations, actions whatsoever, are but embodiments of human nature in the average man;

History is but an epitomic record of the endeavors of
the average man;
Convention, civilization, politics, morals, and all the
rest, are but reflections of the character of the
average man;
(*Here I am. Here we stand. So far — no farther —
have we gone.*)

3

Nations are nothing but multiplications of the average
man;
Are neither profounder nor more significant than the
average man.

Economic forces? — the same as in the average man;
Political differences? — the same as between average
men;
Ambitions? — the same as in the average man;
Hatred? — prejudice? — evil? — the same as in the
average man;
Nobility? — generosity? — the same as in the average
man;
Confusion? — ignorant misapprehension? — silly mis-
understanding? — the same as in the average
man;

Pain and obscurity, the right being somehow accomplished, truth finally emerging unharmed and a little clearer?

The same as in the hopeful, sad, triumphant life of the average man.

Voices of nations, shaking the sky with thunder!

(They are only the merged and cumulative voices of average men:

Here I am. Here we stand. So far — no farther — have we gone.)

4

If you have sincerely investigated human nature in the average man, you know the world;

Enough! — you know now, why we fight and why we live at peace, why we are hateful and loving, why we are false and true;

You know now, why there was not wisdom enough to avoid the conflict;

You know now, that there never can be wisdom enough to avoid the conflict, till human nature is divorced from the material.

(For what you have been calling peace, is only meaner war;

And what you have been calling war, is nearer peace than any peace you show.)

5

The peacemakers speak as if the truth had already arrived;

They speak as if the world could not be bettered much, society in its final stage, man nearing his perfection:

Go, ask the poor if this be so.

They cry that war is a hideous waste of wealth, the stored-up labor of hands;

But if peace stores up the labor of hands for other hands than those which performed the labor, I say that such peace is more hideous waste of wealth than war;

More hopeless waste, where laborers contribute all they have, to prop convention which makes no place for them,

Denying the spirit to sustain the power that holds the spirit down:

(I say, in war, something is being changed — something, at least, is coming through.)

They tell you that the poor must suffer for war — that laborers must pay war's bills:

They have the face to urge that argument!
The poor suffer for peace — laborers pay the bills of peace;
They are used to suffering and paying;
They will only suffer harder, and pay more, the longer materialistic peace goes on.

War offers a freer field for rich and poor to suffer and pay alike;
And only out of war shall come eventual universal equity.

(These are convention's sworn conservatives;
They are society's utilitarians;
They cannot bear to have a bit of it disturbed:
It seems significant to me that they are mostly all rich men.)

6

The theorists work it out well — they would have the world lift itself by the boot-straps;
They seem to forget that the heels are heavier than the head:
(The lowest minds are the governing factor of civilization;
Nothing has been accomplished, unless the average is raised.)

7

The platitude-makers are busy,
Minions and ministers of the world's half-truth,
Prophets of evil days.

Europe has been betrayed! — Civilization has been set back a century!
(As if men from some other planet had stuck a finger in your pie!)
I think it is only Europe's business that has been "betrayed" — the soul of Europe has been affirmed with deathless affirmation;
I think it is only the falsehood of civilization that has been "set back a century":
The truth of civilization has advanced another imperceptible degree.

(Strange how each era claims that it has saved the world;
Strange how each generation stands self-praising, unable to grasp the import of the future, comprehending its own gist the least of all;
Ah, sad and strange, how, when contemporary fog has cleared away, life stands about the same, the truth advanced another imperceptible degree.)

8

Out of the wars of the past, truth has emerged:
Thus we have come to where we stand.

Just as, in the presence and hour of death, in the pain and sorrow, in the sharp arraignment, the veil harshly rent asunder,
Man sees life's truth and falsehood, the spirit, the love, and what it is really for;
So, in the hour of war, nations awake and clear their eyes.

Just as, out of trial, grief, adversity, sore loss, has come man's best endeavor;
So, out of the world's distress, has come its highest dream.

9

Over the heaving, shifting human sea, many a tidal wave is due to pass, washing the shores of distant continents;
Soon shall you hear, old man, the splitting shock of the next eruption;
Soon see the waters drawing back for a recoil;
(The skies hang dark above your head, and heavy with old wrongs.)

There shall be war in the East, and war in the West;
There shall be war between the East and the West;
There shall be civil war, race war, and revolution far and near;
There shall be war enough to stop the mouth of this old hypocrite, and bring him to his knees.

(Then let the foe come down;
And let a thousand years pass by — and let ten thousand years pass by;
And let the wars go on to their tremendous close!)

10

Are there no signs, then? — only hope, unseen, obscure?
Our spirits fail! Give us a sign — give us a sign.

Take heart, take heart, my brother!
O, sometimes I think that there are nothing but signs!
Signs in the sky! Signs in the stirring sea! Signs running along the ground like fire!
Signs in the swaying parliaments! Signs in the trembling courts! Signs in the stifled press! Signs in the sundering schools!
Signs in disintegrating governments! Signs in ancient authorities fiercely defied!

Signs in alarmed society! Signs in quick-arming wealth! — in quicklier-arming poverty!
Signs in the life, the heart, the spirit, of the average man!
Nothing but signs, I say! Nothing but signs!
(*And they are signs of war.*)

II

For I have known men and women laden down with truth, and ballasted with love,
Setting their sails with lifting song, steering boldly out for the open sea, shaping their course for the isles of God,
Refusing help, advice, precaution, compromise,
Letting the rest fall in the wake, or go their way.

And here and there, on the crest of the years, one has appeared,
Sending his soul up like a sheet of flame,
Lighting the sky with terrible glad truth, blinding the world,
To show what man can be.

IX

1

Come now, old man, we have been bluffing long enough:
Show down your hand.

What is this tale that you are trying to tell me?
Do you really expect to continue just as you are, forever and ever?
Do you really expect this nation and that nation to continue just as they are, forever and ever?
Do you really expect this race and that race to continue just as they are, forever and ever?
How are you going to manage it? — I think you will have your job cut out for you.

2

Old man, have you ever thought what the word *eternity* means?
God! — have you ever thought of the time that is to come?

All that has been already, will be as nothing;
All that has taken so long, will be as a grain of sand
in a single stone of the first course of the foundation;
All that has marvellously evolved, will be as an infinitesimal part of the greater plan;
(The greater plan itself will have eternity for growth
and change.)

Why should this stir, this blaze, have burst out on the
earth, with all the billion planets bare?
Is God for us alone, the amazing universe unloved,
untenanted?
Are we the only measurers of space and time?
Are these stars lighted only for our sky?

Though man and world should fail, (as they must fail
some day,) all would be well with greater plans;
All would be well with spirit, truth, and God.

3

Perhaps there is no such a thing as time, unfolding,
passing;
Perhaps the beginning was the end — perhaps the end
may be the beginning;
(I think the whole universe was completely fashioned
and finished long before it was begun.)

VISION OF WAR

I think there is time for me to begin now, and fashion my universe!

I think there is time for the fires I set to burn up the stars in the sky!

I think there is plenty and plenty of time for the leisurely, safe arrival of my last far-sailing dream!

X

I

LABOR-SAVING devices! Engines! Machines!
Immense powers for good or evil! Princely addition to the world's spare time!

How is it now, that I do not see some wonderful creative impulse, because of you?
How is it that I do not see any less poverty, because of you?
How is it that I do not see faith any stronger, because of you?
How is it that I do not see the spirit of man any purer or higher, because of you?

How is it that so far, you have been used merely to spread and enforce the authority of convention?
How is it that so far, your power has always seemed to pass into wrong hands?
How is it that men are weak and insincere enough to call you true, regardless of your works?
Can there be some crafty evil inherent within you?

Ah, not that way, that way!
Prophets and seers we need, more than we need inventors!
Great commanders we need! Warriors of faith we need!
Ancient battle of truth we need! Glorious death we need!
(Not one of your inventions has forwarded a single step the human soul.)

2

Say, can you make it better with a machine, whatever it is you are making?

(No — worse — the shoddy — but more of it, and a great deal quicker;
Then we will advertise — people will think they must buy it;
After a while, it will become a necessity.)

3

Say, why is it so splendid to talk with each other over wires?
I suppose you are able to disseminate righteousness with great expedition;
I suppose you are able to carry truth immediately to the ends of the earth?

(I hope so. In fact, it *must* be so — we are spreading civilization;

We are able to vastly extend our business transactions;
We can clean up twice the business that we did before;
I don't see how we ever got along without the telegraph
and telephone.)

4

Say, what of the Press, the liberal organ of public
opinion?
I imagine truth must be universal by now;
Politics must be perfectly clean — the law must be
absolutely just;
Wrong must be everywhere withheld at the source,
for fear of immediate and fatal disclosure.

(Unfortunately, no. The problem is not so simple as
that;
The papers, of course, are run to make money, like
everything else;
But the trouble is, their income is not derived from
their public support;
This is the day of advertising — the advertisement is
master, not servant, of news;
The advertisers are friendly with the financial crowd
— of course we have to cut out what they don't
like;

Most of the papers are owned, one way or another, by the financial crowd;
It raises the devil with the whole idea.)

5

Say, what of Education?
With every channel open, flowing wide, new channels constantly discovered;
With free instruction, modern schools and theories, all made easy;
With these, and lighter circumstances, and a long term of peace,
Marvels of lofty character must be wrought.
What broad, unbiassed minds the citizens of to-day must have — what solid ground of knowledge — what sane and simple tastes — what clear enlightenment!
And I suppose the children are all led towards the truth, and taught to love it,
So that they grow in grace, not comprehending wrong?

(Quite unaccountably, no. It seems to work out otherwise;
The people seem to throw away, without regard, their wondrous golden time;

The easier life, the less they seem to honor truth;
The happier life, the less they seem to think or care;
With lengthened time, they have less leisure;
With more to read, they are more ignorant;
With wider view, they are more circumscribed;
With sounder lessons, they are more frankly selfish;
They seem to spend their lives in making money, and in being amused.

All the fine avenues that seemed, a while ago, leading towards the spirit's freedom — the hills of truth, the vales of love,
Have curiously pitched into the *cul de sac* of convention, the world's blind alley.

The once-tall frigate of freedom, Education, broke adrift one day from shores of Character;
And now lies moored with many cables, in land-locked harbor of the World — captured, dismantled by the enemy.)

6

Some old things would be good to keep, some would be good to lose;
Some new things are desirable, and some are ill-advised;
Some things are false, and some are true:

But civilization seems to spew out all the old, and swallow all the new, and never face the question.

I have heard men talk about this Progress, as if it were something never seen before;
They are proud of it — they call it pretentious names — they call it what it exactly contravenes;
They have made a brilliant garment — it dazzles their eyes — they are blinded by surfaces and decorations;
They think that the figure that wears the garment must likewise be brilliant and new.

Lift up the robe — peer searchingly — unmask the face;
See the old bones — the festering flesh — the leering skull — the groping hands;
No heart beats in that hollow breast — no love shines in those eyes;
Ah, old, old, old! Old as the selfish world!
Old as the days of old humanity!

(Let go that garment — turn aside. Ah, turn aside!
Behold, God passes, clothed in dream of perfect love.)

7

After a rugged climb, man reaches the plateau of peace;

A level plain, smooth going, pleasant ways — he swings
along with easy stride;
Soon the rough days are far behind, the rocky trail for-
gotten;
Forgotten hardship, sorrow, pain — forgotten triumph
and despair — forgotten fainting strength and con-
quering will.

His nature, born of pain, inured to strife, uneasily
aspiring,
Frets on the pleasant march, grows petty and peevish,
denies the spirit, becomes too conscious of the
body, gives up to self-indulgence,
Makes mountains out of mole-hills, busies itself with
unimportant issues, neglects the vital issues,
Chatters of transitory, vain ideas — keeps silence on
eternal, true ideas,
Loses its way and aim.

(Here is a mountain range at last, old man, across your
easy path;
No mole-hills, these! — bare cliffs, sharp ledges,
frowning chasms, overhanging steeps;
No valley, no way through — only the pass, high up
and far.

Now gird your loins — face ancient facts — take stock
of what is in you;
You are brave enough — you do not hesitate;
No fear! — you will scale a higher mountain than
you climb — you will surmount yourself;
You will be glad and amazed to find your old true self
returning to you.)

XI

I

MONEY to earn, a hard and grasping world!
Come out from hillside farms, all dreaming boys;
Conform, and earn your salt, and win success;
Quit your vain dreams, take hold of something practical;
We will be proud of you, when you are wealthy.
Come out, come out! What, have you no ambition?
Do you not want to build a house to make men envious?
Do you not want to take your ease, and have men work for you?

(I know a worthy man, the father of two boys;
One day we were discussing their education.
"Why don't you make them farmers?" I asked.
"Here is plenty of land;
"Our race is going to need its farmers soon."
He looked at me as if he thought that I could not be serious:

"I have worked too hard with my own hands," he said. "My father was a farmer;

"*I hope to make something better than farmers of my sons!*")

2

Say, boy, what issues from the magnificent house that you are building? — what from the formal and expensive gardens?

Do you wish to be known by the size of your house? — do you think that by the size of your house you will be remembered?

Last summer, I went one day to an old farmhouse that stands on the outskirts of the town;

It was unpainted, dilapidated, sorely neglected — a few old-fashioned perennials, phlox, hollyhock, golden glow, grew in abandoned clumps about the place;

Everything there of material value had run down years ago;

But the whole countryside was gathered there in tears, for a great woman had died in that house;

A spirit had departed there, that could not well be spared.

In pain, in poverty, in the face of physical limitations, (she was lame,) she had carried her soul aloft

like a flaming banner — she had roused hearts, she had inspired;

None of your quiet women, she had struck straight from the shoulder — she had told her neighbors in no uncertain language what was the matter with them, and what they must do;

No one who ever had met her, limping on one crutch along the country road, bent upon some high service, cheery, free-hearted, outright, glad of the morning, glad of the sunlight, glad of her poverty, glad to be going where she was bound,

Head thrown back, eyes peering keenly around, watching the bushes for birds, loving the spirit of nature, feeling its intimate beauty, seeing its secret signs:

No one who ever had stopped her to talk, touching her whimsical, humorous personality, hearing her trenchant sayings, enlarged by her wisdom, helped by her human philosophy, struck by her truth:

No one who ever had known her thus, could forget her message of independence and triumph;

She led her march with a certain dashing, unquenchable bravery;

Out of nothing, she made everything;

With nothing to give, she gave the best of all;

Lacking the money, at times, for her daily food, she built without seeming effort an imperishable mansion of truth, and surrounded it with an ample garden of love.

XII

1

PROUD workers of the world, think not that I belittle
your holy labors;
I have seen the love of homes, I have seen the nobility
of sacrifice and duty;
I have seen the perfect sacrifice of the spirit itself,
for the sake of those it loves;
I have seen how all this truth depends upon material,
the everyday earning of the universal wage;
(I have seen how the wage has come to assume more
importance than the labor;
I have seen how material has come to encroach on
love.)

2

And I have seen blinding poverty, terror of darkness,
panic of hopeless night;
I have seen strong men begging for work, their women
and children starving;
(God! is there nothing for us to do? — we would shift
the hills! — we would bail the sea!)

I have seen men who worked hard all their lives, yet reached old age in poverty and neglect, because they lacked some worldly quality — because they were too generous, or too trusting;

I have seen splendid men dishonored and unsatisfied, ground down to thin and ragged blades, because of wrong or evil fortune;

(I have seen everywhere the hard and cruel bargain that you drive, old man — no place, no peace, except for cash received;

All for the body — nothing for the soul.)

3

And I have seen dishonorable men escape their meed of labor, win the world's friendship, take their ease, and live and die in peace and satisfaction,

Because of old inheritances, or because they did not scruple to sell their souls;

And I have seen men lacking justice and truth and love, unworthy to fashion their own lives,

Wielding a power to make or break the lives of other men, because of wealth acquired through their unworthiness;

(And these would seem to be the only lives that are not lived in spite of you, old man.)

4

I am not one of those who claim that the spirit of man
exerts itself only under the whips of circumstance;
I am not in the least part one of those who claim that
the spirit of man is not to be trusted alone;
I think that those who preach such a doctrine are in-
terested parties;
I think that they are the ones who stand to gain.

I do not believe that human nature is essentially evil;
I do not believe in the doctrine of original sin;
I believe that human nature is not aware of its own
essential goodness;
I believe that its best and most essential part has never
had a fair show.

5

I say, if you have imperfections, it is chiefly convention
which has brought them out;
If you are being defeated in your aspirations, it is
chiefly convention which is holding you back;
If your love is at discount instead of at premium, it
is chiefly convention which demands such usury;
It is chiefly convention which is the enemy of your
heart and spirit and inherent dream.

(And I say that in submitting to convention, you have bound your spirit into deeper slavery than ever shackled the body of man;
And I say that, by a word, and without a shadow of treachery, you could break your chains.)

6

There is no need for this close-corporation of society;
There is no need for this low and selfish convention;
It is not necessary for dishonesty to be better rewarded than honesty;
It is not necessary for suspicion and covetousness to be more expedient than trust and love;
It is not necessary to have life hinge upon the making of money — the making of money is not a natural function of life;
(The natural function of life is labor:
It is want, and fear of want, that clouds your true design.)

7

It is easily possible to do away altogether with this convention;
It is easily possible to do away altogether with such a thing as the private ownership of property;
It is easily possible to do away altogether with such things as hereditary titles and estates;

It is easily possible to do away altogether with such things as nations, and patriotism, and all local rivalries and jealousies;

It is easily possible to do away altogether with everything artificial in the world.

It is just as easily possible for everything natural to be espoused, and for everything ideal to supervene;

It is easily possible to arrange the world so that there shall be no more poverty;

It is easily possible to arrange the world so that men shall receive the just deserts of everything they do;

It is easily possible for society to become a coöperative institution as simple and true as the society of pioneers;

It is easily possible for all men to become unselfish, intelligent, and sincere;

It is easily possible for all men to learn to love their labor;

It is easily possible for all men, all over the world, to live together forever and ever in peace and happiness and perfect love.

8

What does it mean, old man, when you say that human nature rises only to selfish, material bait?

What does it mean, when you drawl your worldly wisdom, and smile your cynical smile?

It means that the farmer must go on turning his crops into money, striving to beat his neighbor — though his true reward were his labor, though God working beside him were left unseen, unheard;

It means that the preacher must go on adulterating truth with financial considerations — a poisonous mixture;

It means that the average man must go on wanting material possessions, envying wealth, never content;

It means that evil must go on being bribed and bought off by gifts of gold;

It means that the gold for the bribes must go on being given by those who have profited through the evil — convention's widening circle;

It means that the spirit must go on being crucified, and love go on being slain.

(Is this the life God meant?

Ah, surely, somewhere there is a land where we may be happy as children are happy, and a life for us full of truth and love!)

9

But more than any or all of these, it means:
It means, old man, that you believe that human nature
is worthy of no better scheme.

(Now dodge the point — I know your trick — you are
always trying to reverse the imputation;
But I tell you now, old man: — *You are the one of little
faith;*
You are the one looking on the dark side of things;
*You are the one standing against the main stream of
human nature — the pent-up, rising, strong, resist-
less flood.*)

10

I have striven to remember, and tried to keep in mind,
the poor, the poor;
And do you strive to remember, and try to keep in
mind, *the poor, the poor;*
You, I mean — do you say it over, and think it over,
to yourself: —
The poor — the poor — the poor.

(And do you know, if truth survives, it lives among the
poor;
If any truth shall come, it shall appear among the
poor.)

XIII

1

I AM no authority — I consider myself no authority;
(I have no use for authority — nothing has ever been accomplished that way;)
I am only an average man, speaking of average things to average men.

I do not particularly want you to believe what I say;
I certainly do not want you to take what I say for granted, (but I know that I am right;)
If I can excite your faith in the opposite of what I say, I shall be happy;
If I can provoke you to be my stern and unsparing enemy, I shall be supremely happy;
(We need many stern and unsparing enemies, for our best friends.)

2

I love the body — I love good food and drink, and good companionship;

I love all sorts of natural pleasures, and every touch
of old humanity;
I think that the body is vastly finer and more im-
portant than the world affirms.

I want the things of the world — I enjoy material
possessions;
I delight in the spending of money — I am unhappy
when I have none to spend.

I like life as it is, the good and bad, divine and mean;
I like its multitudinous varieties, its infinite oppor-
tunities;
I like its swift and sweeping changes — I like its losses
and its gains;
I like its secret satisfactions, struggles, impulses;
I like its hatreds and its wrongs — I like its loves —
I like its gleams of truth like shining stars;
I like its peace and war;
I like it all, I want it all;
I would swing high and low, and never pause.

(In life, I would humble myself a little lower than the
lowest;
But in my heart I would hold myself to be a son of
God.)

3

I am lazy and good-for-nothing;
No one needs the whips of circumstance more than I;
No one has fallen farther short of his dream than I;
I am unable to fulfil my spirit for a single day, or for a single hour.

(I fling the lie in your teeth, old man!
I do not fear you — I challenge you out to mortal combat;
I select from my quiver a keen and slender arrow, dipped in fire;
I place it against my singing string, I draw my bow with all my might;
I will have your life — you cannot escape my shaft of love.)

XIV

I

TELL me, was Belgium heroically true in times of peace?
Was the spirit of Belgium exalted in times of peace, as it is in times of war?

(Above the dark, secret continent,
On the tropic air, in the deathly solitudes of hidden, horrible places,
Where childlike souls have lost their only hope,
Lingers a mournful cry.)

Ivory, and gold, and human greed!
Do you think the only evil is, that a few men forgot themselves on the Congo — that a few men at home turned their faces aside?
Do you think these few will suffer for their crimes, here or hereafter, and pay off the score?
Is not the money that they made, spread broadcast, part of the wealth of western civilization?

Is not the idea that lay behind the making of this money, the idea of convention?
Will not this money, turning over and over, serve to confirm and strengthen this idea?
I tell you, out of the mouth of the Congo issued a far-permeating stream of evil,
Tainting the spirit of the whole world.

2

What, give up a share of profits, to make some savages happier?
Give all the profits up? — consider the profits held in trust for savages?
They could not have made the money, without our trade:
(But I was not thinking so much of the savages' money, as of the state of your soul.)

What, would you place the savage above the civilized man? — would you place the savage on an equality, even, with the civilized man?
He is not worthy of our condition — he cannot grasp our relations and purposes — he is not able to comprehend our political, social, ethical ideas:
(But he can suffer, and be unhappy, and die.)

3

What of the land?
Shall the savage retain his ample sovereignties, while the civilized man pants in confinement?
Has not the land ever belonged to the power that could seize and hold it?

(Profound, elusive contradiction:
Truth in a falsehood — right in wrong:
The spirit advancing over the bodies of the slain!)

4

Bow down in the twilight, bare the head:
Hour of the War! Belgium, thy sad, immortal hour.

We may not see again the lands of home;
We may not see the faces that we loved;
For the best truth we know, we fight and die;
Our country calls! Our country, and our King!

XV

1

Ah, England, England, England!
What works are these, in times of peace?

I suppose that, by keeping Turkey alive beyond her day, for your designs,
You thought to balance off dead Christians in Turkey against live Christians at home;
So many massacred in Turkey, to pay the price of a more profitable peace for greater numbers of the happy living, in another place;
Claiming that all of them would die some day.

(*Compromise! Compromise! Compromise!*
The world's weak, time-worn, easy argument,
While it rakes in the profits with both hands.)

2

I tell you, there are not lives enough in all England, to pay the price of one Armenian killed for England's benefit, through England's agency;

I tell you, when you arranged this matter, you were thinking of peoples' bodies, bodily happiness, material possessions;
I tell you, you were disregarding altogether the spirits both of those you sheltered and those you sacrificed;
I tell you, those you thought to save shall be lost, and those you thought to abandon shall be saved.

3

But what of China's opium trade?
No shadow there, no subtle shift — nothing but bitter fact;
Nothing but gold, nothing but greed of gain;
These Chinamen were powerless to resist;
A people had no right to be so powerless;
A people so powerless, had no right;
So you imposed the curse, and pocketed the proceeds,
Sending out missionaries to teach them love of Christ.

(You have mended that matter of the opium trade?
I know all that — compromise! — compromise! — compromise!
You have had your money, and used it as you pleased;
Nothing shall be forgotten in the final settlement.)

4

You slackened this slow torture of the yellow millions,
when you were brought to it by material considerations, and not before;
You let up on the screws, when it paid you better to
let up, than to give them another turn;
Only when China was making other friends, and when
your friends were making friends with China;
Only when you saw that it would pay you better in
other directions, to keep friends with China;
(And only when this great people, roused at last to
the insidious danger,
Was throwing off the evil, in times of peace, in the face
of every obstacle raised by you, by the assembled
efforts of individual strong wills;)
Only then, did you consent to remove the terrible ban.

(Take thought upon that act and issue:
This is the people keeping its lands constantly fertile
for forty centuries;
This is the people holding its strain pure and productive;
This is the people cleaving to fundamentals, deep and
wise;
This is the people moored for long in a sheltered harbor,
watching storms go by outside;

This is the people now calmly and confidently weighing
anchor and setting sail, bound on a long momen-
tous voyage.)

5

Hour of the War!
England, I see you hiding still among the shadows.

Tell me, what is the difference between the right to
hold previous conquests, and the right to make
new conquests?
Tell me, have you ever been seen fighting the fight of
a smaller nation, when it did not serve your own
ends?
Tell me, have you religiously, consistently respected
all treaties, neutralities, obligations?

(I have been reading some queer Eastern tales;
Stories of Persia, India, Africa — they are full of
human nature;
Strange, how human nature is everywhere the same!)

6

Come, England, face about, and take an honest stand;
God knows, there is good reason for you to fight.

Empire in danger! Sound the trumpets! Give alarm!
Flash it beneath the sea, and through the sky, to your outlying realms!

The mother-land in danger! — see them rise!
See, on the distant sky-line, the banners waving!
See, on the far horizon, the great ships sailing on!
See all your children arming, marching, coming home!
(Our country calls! Our country, and our King!)

7

You say that you are fighting a battle, too, for my America?
Perhaps — but I say, it is no kindness to her, either intentional or consequent;
She must fight her own battles some day, win or lose.

8

I think democracy is in greater danger from your untrue alliance, and from your arbitrary censorship, than from anything that I have seen;
I think the autocracy of Germany is but another step farther removed from truth itself, than your democracy, or than the democracy of my America;
I think there is the same long road for all of us ahead;
(We may be overtaken and passed on the road.)

9

England, fight well! Be glad to show yourself, and
prove yourself;
Be glad of courage reaffirmed, and grace reborn.

(But no more talk of broken faith, thou faithless!
But no more talk of wrong of conquest, thou born
arch-conqueror!)

XVI

1

Ah, France, I think thou hast the highest and the lowest:
The most of dreams — the least of their fulfilment.

Thou hast chased and inlaid thy chains with beautiful devices;
Thou hast wrought them in cunning patterns, and skillfully touched them with rich pigments, in ornate designs:
But underneath bites deep the iron, crude and strong.

2

Quick, ardent, passionate, honoring fame and loving glory,
I think the spirit of no land, O France, is easier inflamed by truth;
I think the spirit of no land, (except, perhaps, of my America,) is more wantonly materialistic in times of peace;

You head the march of restless, notorious contradictions:
Procession of democracies in fief and fee of Baron Gold.

3

Hour of the War! Thy bells, O France, strike out the long-awaited hour:
Thy spirit finds its song — thy heroes hear.

From all we love, we gladly turn aside;
All we have saved, we gladly sacrifice;
For the best truth we know, we fight and die;
Marchons, marchons, marchons! Our country calls!

XVII

I

I KNEW a boy — a melancholy, dream-filled youth;
He had suffered too much poverty and wrong;
But still he dreamed, and still he clung to faith in dreams.

I knew him well, those years;
We used to walk on the hills, in the eyes of the wind, sounding our dreams together;
I loved and honored him, he had such truth, his message seemed so sure.
"You have beheld life's harshness, and the world's injustice," I told him;
"And yet you give your soul's allegiance to love."

He looked at me with eyes like clear, deep-burning fires;
Then turned away, holding his arms out to the sky.

"Never shall I forswear the powers of love!
"My misery has purified my dream!

"The more is taken from me, the more I hold myself in readiness to give!
"Never shall I betray the dream of love, God's trust in me!"

2

I did not see my friend for years;
When next we met, his air of ardent youth was gone;
We fell to talk — I found a bitter change in him.

"How I have wasted life!" he cried;
"I have eaten out my heart — what has it brought me?
"Such men as I were not born to inaction;
"I tell you, I am abler than the rest, because of these same dreams;
"I am tired of poverty — I have been brooding on my wrongs;
"I can win wealth, and ease, and power, as well as any one;
"I can do what they do, and more besides."

"My friend," I said, "where is your dream of love?"

3

"There is a higher dream than dream of love!" he cried:
"The dream of right to live."

"Right to live how?" I asked;
"Right to live true, or false? — right to live well, or ill?"

"Right to live true, and well."

"But what is that, but right to live by dream of love?"

"You do not understand!" he cried;
"Right to live true to ourselves — right to fulfil ourselves;
"Right to be openly what we are."

"Right to live as we please," I answered him;
"That is a claim as old as man and time:
"*It is betrayal of the truth — the soul's high treason!*"

4

"You do not understand," he said again;
"The dream of love is for the individual — this dream is for the many;
"It brings the greatest good to greatest numbers."

"Good for the body?" I asked, "or for the soul?"

"Why — half for both," he said.

"There is no dream for one that is not for many, or
for many that is not for one;
"The greatest good for the soul is dream of love;
"The body is not entered in the reckoning."

"What, shall a public wrong rest unavenged, like a
private wrong?
"What, shall a public profit by unselfishness, like some
rare person especially endowed?
"What, shall a nation able to win more than any
neighbor be content with poverty?
"What, shall a people be oppressed, and choose to lie
defenceless, knowing itself more powerful than its
oppressors?
"What, shall a man who sees this higher truth refuse
to face his destiny?
"That were betrayal indeed!"

5

Ah, Germany, where are your ancient dreams?

You are cruelly earnest, terribly serious;
You have fought with your soul — now you are fight-
ing the world:
(But I think it was the world that you won in your
soul;
I think it is your soul that fights you now in the world.)

I think you are just another awful contradiction;
I think you have tried to make a religion out of scepticism;
Something, at any rate, has kept you in fighting trim;
Something has fired you with the reaction of a dream.

I think you are creative religious power, in arms against religion;
I think you are love gone mad, contending in the dark with love.

6

I think you are monstrously, religiously wrong;
(A man may be monstrously, religiously wrong — and a nation may be monstrously, religiously wrong.)

It is not alone the soft religion of Christianity, that you are throwing aside;
The dogma of Christianity is only a certain creed of the great religion of Spirit;
Much of it was developed by the Church, after it had become a financial institution;
Much of it belongs to the past — little of it has followed Christ's design:
(What you are determined to throw aside, is all religion of Spirit — life's faith, world's hope, and man's divinity.)

But the truth that spoke in Christ's high dream of love
was transcendental truth;
And out of it has come democracy — and out of it shall
surely come the brotherhood of man;
And this you had — and this you might have made your
great religion;
And this you could not see.

7

Ah, Germany!
You are no longer troubled by dreams, and fits of mel-
ancholy, and your old wild inspirations;
You follow sterner ways, more manly fancies;
You live in confident assurance of material power:
(But it is easier to give dreams up, than win them back
again.)

You could not see that this old loss of yours was all
your gain — your greatness, your own romantic
imposition;
You could not see how, over the heads of nations, your
truth shone out — ruler of Thought, the only em-
pire that endures.

You are no weaker than the rest — I do not blame —
God love and pity you;
You found the world too strong.

Another hope is gone — I say good-by to it and you:
And yet, I blame you more — for once you had the dream of love.

8

Nothing so near, is sure;
Future is large, ways are innumerable;
The imminent shall be lost — the least foreseen shall arrive.

But this is sure: —*The future shall not be to the nation or race of most material power;*
But the future shall finally be to the nation or race of most potential spiritual power.

XVIII

I

WHAT looms against the silence and the shadow,
There where the dawn is due to come?
What monstrous shape uprises, flinging aside the garments of night,
Shaking loose wild locks, lifting rude arms in mysterious attitudes of invocation?
What dormant bulk is stirring there? — what vague activity? — what heave of life, half-hidden, half-revealed?

O I am terrified! O ominous unknown! Impenetrable gloom!
O I have seen the gleam of savage eyes, shining out there in dreadful darkness!
O I have heard strange sounds! Vast whispers through the sky! Deep sighs! O awful breathing sounds, like muttered prayers!
O spreading light! What moves? — what lurks? — what comes?
O fateful signs! O pitiless cold sheen!
O I must hide myself in some dark cave!

O stop the dawn! O I have seen too much! I am afraid!

(*Take heart, take heart, my brother;*
I arise in dreams, I float on clouds of faith, I scale the sky;
I see, above the horizon, above the awakening gigantic shapes of night and terror, above the parturient lands,
The day beyond the dawn.)

2

Russia! Mother of Slavs! Fathomless spirit — body of gross, brute health — all natural, coarse, untamed!
I think thou bearest within thy fecund womb the seed of passionate high dreams;
I think thou art pregnant with promises of love.

For I have seen in the East a mystic symbol:
Truth flashing up the sky, night pierced and torn, and great fires burning fiercely, far away;
And all the heavens are resonant, under thy high arched cloud, echoing thunderous, majestic strains;
And sudden cries ring out, shaking the stars, thrilling the firmament, trumpets of God;
And, listening close, I have heard thy secret voice, murmuring in solitudes, repeating old, eternal words.

XIX

1

JAPAN, you have learned it well — you may go to the
head of the class;
You speak it without a hitch — you can beat the others
at their own game,
(And that is why your day is not so long.)

Do you think that a race can throw overboard a well-
stowed cargo of two thousand years, and tumble
in an alien load, and crack on sail?
There is no ballast in that ship — she cannot stand
against God's gusty wind;
She will go over in some squall, and drown her
company:
(The squalls come heavy off the China shore.)

2

All the old beauty gone, the fine old truth,
The ancient honor of an upright race;
A nation's birthright sold for the world's pottage,

While the Elder Statesmen shake their heads, prepared
to go.

A century's brief power — and then a century to die:
For this, you dare to wake the sleeping giant:
And this shall be your end.

XX

I

Do you congratulate yourself, America, because on this
side of the water you are at peace?
I tell you, the seed of all this conflict has surely crossed
to you;
It came along with your first ships, concealed in bal-
last;
It caught root on the bank where you discharged your
cargo;
It crept along the roads you made through virgin for-
ests;
It took the ground in the last clearing on your fron-
tiers;
It walks beside you where you go, your emblem, your
armorial weed,
Advancing, penetrating, where you go.

It flourishes superbly in your midst, sowing broadcast,
without restraint;
Pull up dead stalks, old man — carefully collect them
and pile them up — complacently burn them;

But the seed from year to year escapes on wings of selfishness;
It lies unnoticed, germinating in the ground.

2

America, I think you have not shown yourself;
I think you are stronger than you know, and weaker than you know;
A people supremely material, I think you are at heart a people supremely spiritual;
I think the best of you lies latent, waiting the word.

I think that you have never been put to the true test — the test of poverty;
I think that you have had too much success, and altogether too much money to throw around;
I think that when the real trial comes, you will be found a land quick to battle and revolution;
I hope, for the sake of your dreams, that you may have many revolutions;
I hope, for the sake of your spirit, that you may have many desperate wars.

3

Tendencies, tendencies, tendencies:
See where they lead.

You are building structures of material, terribly tall;
I fear they are getting so tall, that they can never be pulled down in peace and safety;
I think they will soon be so solid and tall, that they can only be blown down by dynamite of war:
(Know that they all must come down some way, and be destroyed, before the site is clear for truth to build.)

4

It is because you are as simple in dealing with money, as in dealing with truth, that I have hopes of you, America;
The very childishness of your materialism is a good sign.

(I think you are just an overgrown boy, playing with engines and forces of which you have scant knowledge;
They fascinate you — you are bound to tinker with them — you ardently long to control them;
You are liable to blow yourself up some day — but if you don't, you will find out how they work;
And if you tear them apart in the process, better so.)

5

Unsound, nonchalant, wasteful of good, (wasteful of evil, too;)

Luxury-loving, forsaking simplicity, adopting complexity, honoring smartness and cleverness, (in serious moments, deploring these things, too;)

Ambitious of culture and knowledge, but ambitious, first of all, of wealth — making the prime mistake of thinking that culture and knowledge can be bought, after the wealth is made;

Drifting easily into dishonesty, (but quick to raise a hue-and-cry, when dishonesty is pointed out;)

Following low ideals, (but ready for any ideals, when you have time to spare;)

Madly working the mines of material, turning and clanking the machinery, busily stoking the fires, smoking and smutting the sky;

Leaving untouched the mines of love, (but they are there — your mountain ranges rest on beds of love;)

Scorning the bodily rule of kings — inviting the spiritual rule of gold;

Submitting frankly to the worst rule of all — the tyranny of Self;

(But it is only ignorance — the actual powers are always in your hands;)

O, I see without a doubt, America, that you are bound for war!

6

You have a splendid theory of democracy, the work of wise and sincere men;
A theory you have never fully practised — a theory you have never more than half tried out;
Restless, impatient, insufficient, you must change and change:
(But until you have proved yourself the master of the simple system that you have, you are not worthy of more complicated systems.)

You are looking for short cuts to the millennium;
Not true enough yourself to vote for the right man, you are looking for a quick way to turn out of office the wrong man that you elected, and elect another wrong man;
A certain germ in your blood makes you resent the superiority of an honest and able man;
He is apt to oppose your selfishness — his medicine is apt to be too strong.

7

The editors and the orators are all with you — there is something new and strange in the air;
An alarming proposition — a notion that, because you

want a thing, it is therefore, without a question, right and good;
They are telling you that the way to be happy is to dodge unhappiness;
They are telling you that the way to be true is to do as you please.

(They are telling you things like these, to make more money out of you;
They find that it pays them well.)

8

But I think that it is education for voters that you need, more than you need new systems of election;
I think that the fact that you want a thing throws the burden of proof of its worth to the other side;
I think that if you do not face and down unhappiness, it will return upon you unawares.

I think that all these new-fangled schemes aim only at the outer white of *have-your-way;*
Miss altogether the true mark, bull's-eye of *best-for-you.*

(I am more conservative than the most hide-bound conservative;

And I am more liberal than the most extravagant liberal:
I believe in giving up, rather than holding, possessions;
I believe that men can be brought both to vote, and to run for office, in unselfishness,
I believe that a democracy can be governed by love.)

9

I give you this far thought:
Not for yourself, or yours, or for your land, or for your race;
Not for to-day, not for to-morrow, not for time;
But for humanity, the children of man, the lands of man;
And for eternity.

XXI

I

I HAD a strange, unquiet, happy dream:
A warrior came upon his enemy — he might have had his life — he let him go;
For, as he aimed, he had a dream, within my dream.

He had a dream of peace and brotherhood;
He came home empty-handed from the war-path;
He broke his bow before the lodge, for all to see;
He went into the field to plant the seed.

And after days had passed, and they had seen this man refrain from hunts and wars;
And after they had seen him working all day in the clearing;
After such proof, they led him forth, beyond the limits of the village, to a broad grassy plain,
His squaws and children following, bewailing their disgrace, bearing the household on their backs;
And there they bade him live, and work his foolish dream, since he no longer held the spirit to dwell with fighting men.

2

Then in my dream I saw, (as dreams will shift and show,) after what seemed an empty, barren span, a movement in the gloom;
And light broke out — and, issuing from the wigwam on the plain, in surging, broadening, never-ending stream,
I saw a mighty progeny pour forth — a swelling multitude — a youthful, ardent throng, with faces glad and serious,
Spreading across my view, darkening the farthest horizon, restless, advancing,
Toiling, struggling, aspiring, loving, begetting, planting the seed, reaping the harvest,
A nation of peace and plenty, inhabiting an open, fertile land.

(I saw them at their prayers — my dream dropped down:
They worshipped some old massive bright-faced idol;
Some ancient image they had found, buried beneath the plain.)

3

And then a shadow crossed my dream — confusion fell like night;

VISION OF WAR

I saw the peaceful people armed for battle;
I saw, around the margin of the plain, enemies gathering on every hand;
I saw the fires of jealousy flare up along the hills;
I saw the stealthy, slinking shapes of spies and traitors;
I saw fierce hatreds, born of truth and love;
I saw wild wars, fought in the name of peace;
I saw the idol lifted up — I saw it tossing where the sorest strife arose;
I saw the sky all dark, and shot with lurid gleams;
I saw destruction, death, defeat, the anguish of lost hopes;
I saw the blood-red land, trampled and torn, strewn with the bodies of the slain.

I heard unearthly clamor, piercing screams, the rend and shock of armies closed in war, and sounds of misery along the fields;
And over all, a higher, louder, wilder note I heard, a great voice shouting down the sky:
Truth's terrible thundering battle-cry, bursting above attacking and defending hosts of spirit-driven men.

4

And then, in this strange dream, a curtain seemed to lift, and I beheld a wondrous scene;

A scene, (as dreams mysteriously shift and show,)
distant, yet unaccountably near;
One glimpse, I had — a glimpse that seemed eternity.

I saw the plain transformed, a happy land again — yet
happier, in some marvellous way, than it could
possibly have been before;
I saw the harvest plentiful as of old — yet richer far,
because of just and perfect share;
I saw life all the same, the occupations all the same, the
joys and sorrows all the same, the love and truth
the very same — yet altogether changed, because
the dread uncertainty was gone;
I saw the heart of perfect peace, untroubled now by
greed, for no one owned the land.

I saw the people toiling happily, the weary laborers
happy in the fields, the women resting happy at the
doors,
All weary and happy with the day, awaiting with joy the
happy night of sleep and dreams;
And all the skies seemed happy there, and all the trees
were swaying, and all the birds sang loud and clear;
And labor seemed no more a thing despised, but seemed
instead the noblest, happiest thing of all;

And honest work was being done, and hands were gladly
serving, and spirits seemed to find their true re-
ward;
And every face I saw, seemed happy and content.

XXII

1

So far, the tendencies of democracy have been to crush, rather than liberate, the spirit of the average man;
So far, the tendencies of democracy have been to narrow, rather than amplify, the intelligence of the average man;
So far, the tendencies of democracy have been to lower, rather than raise, the character of the average man;
(And I think these tendencies were inevitable from the first, and are but the natural balance of grave inequalities.)

For what is democracy but an idea far ahead of its time, and far beyond its fulfilment?
And what is democracy, after all, but the half of a nobler idea, not generally accepted yet?
What is it but the first stage only, on the march towards the promised land?

2

Long ago, the Teutonic village gave up its folklands, its communal property;

The democracies sprung from Teutonic folkmoot are strictly political institutions;
They assure a man his political rights, but have no word for his social rights;
They deny the divine hereditary right of kings, but affirm the divine hereditary right of wealth;
They have not tackled the trouble with life itself — the vested right of private property:
(This, like the rest, must come by growth — must spring within.)

Look to the Russian village, tenaciously democratic, still holding its lands as folklands;
Still holding in common right and share, the labor and product of the land:
There spans the measure of an onward step.

3

All levelled? — all aspiring heads cut off? — all laggards pensioned? — equal grab for all?
Ah, God forbid! — you have not yet begun to understand this dream;
I tell you, the task is going to be harder, instead of easier, for every one of us;
For this dream presupposes universal self-control, while you are talking of free selfishness.

Nothing shall be so different then, from now;
The merit won through trials now, shall be acquired through higher trials, self-imposed;
The pain endured shall be the pain we still must bear;
The failings curbed shall be our failings still to overcome;
The virtues that we have to-day shall be our virtues still.

4

I sing the average man — there is an average man, there is an average human nature;
But nowhere have I said it would be well for every man to be that average man, or for all human nature to become that average;
The true democracy and peace shall find a way to foster personality — to raise the worker and the laggard both and separate, instead of adding and dividing by two;
And it shall find a way to draw out individual initiative, as individual initiative has never been drawn out before.

(What way? — I have such faith in dreams, and in humanity,
That I believe, when the prime cause of selfishness has been removed, man will respond with marvels of

originality, with prodigies of labor, with miracles of love;

And I believe, with all my heart, that the free spirit of man, unqualified, following its own bent, will rise to heights undreamed-of — will stand upright in wisdom, power, and love, facing its future and its God.)

5

I think that humanity is in for a long period of confusion, disappointment — a period of transition;

I think that the world has yet to pass through the Dark Ages of democracy, while practice is catching up with theory:

I think that civilization is going to be even more selfish and materialistic than it is to-day, before it shows much improvement;

I think that the spirit, intelligence, character of the average man will run still lower, before they begin to rise.

I think that a crowd of unruly boys has broken up the school of life, and driven out the teachers, and burned the rods of discipline;

(The rods of toil and self-denial — the biting rods of truth and love;)

I think that the stern fathers of nature have already
taken the path, to round up these truant boys;
I think that under still firmer teachers, in fear and
anger, they will be put to school again;
(They say that Hunger and War have been engaged —
they are iron-handed teachers;)
And I think these boys will learn, after a while, the
simple lessons that seem to come so hard.

(They are not bad boys at heart — they are only young,
and full of human nature;
You will see them amount to something, later on.)

6

Searchers for truth! — you have felt the hopelessness
of what you find?

Look up, look up, my brothers!
Nothing is hopeless for humanity!
Nothing is hopeless for life and time and change!

All shall be culled and tried:
Only the true shall endure.

7

Perhaps you are identifying democracy with the races,
nations, which have brought it forward,

Feeling that it must stand or fall with them:
(It is hard to think of the institutions of the present, as not belonging to the peoples of the present.)

But know that democracy is just a true idea, (and true ideas are born invulnerable;)
And know that, once conceived, democracy belongs to no races, nations, but to humanity;
And know that it shall never be lost or spoiled by children of men.

8

Or perhaps you are considering the island of Britain as permanently belonging to England;
Or perhaps you are considering the central portion of North America as permanently belonging to the United States:
(It is hard to think of the land, except in terms of the names that label the land.)

But know that England and the United States are only false ideas, (and false ideas are doomed to pass and go;)
Know that the whole idea of nationality, motive of modern civilization, is a false idea — symbol of selfishness, its working power, machinery of gain;

For you will find that when the state of spirit has advanced, England, and the United States, and all the nations, will have ceased to exist as such;

And you will find that they were absolutely of no importance — they will not be the slightest loss to any one;

And you will find that the different areas which they occupied are really sections of free and nameless land.

9

Do you suppose, old man, because you have a thing called twentieth-century civilization:

Do you suppose, because you can run around so fast, and pass it around so far, and write it down, and teach it from your books:

Do you suppose, because of things like these, that you are immune from the fate that has heretofore overtaken races, nations, that have run themselves into the ground?

Do you suppose, because of things like these, that your affairs are any more important to humanity, than the affairs of races, nations, of antiquity?

I tell you, very soon shall come the time when your affairs shall be to other races, nations, only affairs of dim antiquity;

Your books and records all destroyed, your few enduring monuments deciphered and explained, your barbarous state examined curiously;
Your ruins traced and excavated, cleared of the mould yet untransformed.

And in that time, old man, you will not be judged by cities, progress, conquests, wealth — by what you spend your life upon;
But you will be judged and remembered solely by what your spirit has attained in ways of truth;
And maybe something you deem unimportant, some spark of dream, will be your final message, your highest mounting fire;
And maybe what you love the most will loom out of the past in true proportion, monstrous guise;
And maybe grievous wars to come, old man — past wars to them yet farther on, the pain long since forgotten, the battles sunk in their results — will show as wars of human liberation from the state you still must fight to gain.

(You are but one more step in the tall stair that man is building up to Heaven's gate;
Not very different — maybe not so sound as some;

The topmost now — the others leading up to you:
But in thin air the steps shall rise above, beyond —
the steps of dreams — you leading up to them.)

10

But if you are expecting the world to be a quiet place,
you are going to be terribly disappointed;
And if you are trying to smooth life out with selfish-
ness, your scheme will fail.

For I tell you, you shall face your spirit yet, old man, on
even, open ground, and fight it out in blood and
agony;
I tell you, life shall heave like the sea, and lash like
the wind, under God's hurricane;
I tell you, the world shall be ripped from end to end,
until the truth is shown.

11

Until this civilization dies away to simpler forms — to
wiser, truer laws — to natural relations;
Until men give up false inventions and machines, and
turn again to toil and handicraft;
Until men strive with all their might to have less of
material, instead of more;

Until the shame and the fear of poverty give place to the honor and joy of poverty;
Until the position of servant is acknowledged as the position of master;
Until the spirit of man is strong enough to live constantly face to face with truth and God.

Until these things are shown, not here and there, by solitary idealists, but universally, by man's whole ardor and volition;
Until the dreams of boys become the dreams of men.

XXIII

1

HOUR of the War! *World-flung Religious War! The War of Scepticism!*

(Have you not seen the significance of what I have been trying to say?
Have you not seen the inner significance of what is going on?
It lies in the spiritual state of the average man:
It lies in the religion of the average man.)

2

Religion is the indispensable necessity of man — religion is the soul;
Religion is belief — without belief, I die;
For consciousness shall never be explained — and life is marvellous — and birth is life's abundant miracle — and at the end stands death — and the soul's destiny beyond — and God beyond;
But I may eat and drink my faith, and never die.

Nothing exists, occurs, or has its being, except by virtue of its conception in the spirit;
Everything, in the last analysis, is a religious manifestation;
Everything that is thought, is thought for a religious reason — everything that is done, is done for a religious reason;
England is a religious reason — Germany is a religious reason;
Man is brought forth out of the womb for a religious reason — his character is altogether made up of religious reasons — his death is a religious reason;
(Lack of religion is the profoundest religious reason of all.)

3

This Nietzschean idea — I understand it well;
It is nothing but the last word of scientific scepticism;
It is nothing but the materialism of western civilization caught up and made into a pagan song;
It is nothing but half-truth confronting life's dead wall.

Religion of Valor — Will to Power — the Superman:
They are nothing but an attempt to apply to the spirit a theory of evolution which can only be applied to the body;

They are nothing but an attempt to revert the spirit
into the state of nature;
They are nothing but an open and plain attempt to ful-
fil the soul through selfishness.

4

The state of nature is state of body and material;
The state in which, so far, the world has lived — the
state in which, so far, life has evolved;
The forms changing and being perfected through self-
ishness in the individual, everything happening
in its course and time.

But men are dreaming of another state — a state of
spirit;
(For spirit happened in its wondrous time;)
A state of all unselfishness — a state of perfect love:
Master of state of nature, absolute superior, it shall
bend the body to its will, put the material to true
use, and justify God's faithful, sanguine dream:
That way the future lies.

5

Draw the line distinct and hard, between the body and
soul;
The body belongs to the state of nature — the soul, to
the state of spirit;

The realm of the body is instinct — the realm of the soul, is reason;
The way of the body is desire — the way of the soul is will;
The *self* is the body — the *un-self* is the soul.

6

Who shall define the spirit? — who shall set its bounds?
Who shall say, here the spirit began? — or who shall affirm, here reason began?
Reproduction entails the protection of the seed;
I think that among the lowest forms of life, there is a measure of unselfishness;
I think that even in protoplasm, there must have been an infinitesimal grain of love.

(But I only know that, whenever it came, or wherever it came from, the spirit of man is essentially different from his body;
I only know that reason and will are essentially different from instinct and self — and that they are masters of instinct and self;
And I only know that their greatness consists in unselfishness, and that the greatness of spirit consists in love.)

7

Now speaks the Sceptic: — "You defeat yourself at every turn;
"Body and spirit are one — both are for happiness;
"Nature is master — the state of nature is all;
"Greatness of life consists in greatness of passions and impulses;
"Greatness of man is force — greatness of nations is power;
"Reason and will are greatest where instinct is greatest;
"All are the spirit — and spirit is self — and self is fulfilled by having its human way."

8

Sceptic, I will answer you with a simple question:
How is it, then, that a conscience has evolved along with man, to challenge his instincts, to vex his body so?

(Fool! — cannot you see that however important selfishness has been, unselfishness has, from the very first, been more important?
The train of self was laid — but had that spark of love not set it off, so long ago, the fire of spirit would never have run down to you.)

9

This Nietzschean idea cannot be shouldered off — it cannot be pushed aside;
You, above all, old man, are not the one to shoulder it off, or push it aside.

Tell me, what is this Individuality, that I hear you acclaiming so loud?
It has made your material fortune, I know — but what of your spiritual fortune?
It has ministered to your body, I know — but what of your soul?

10

Now what rank flower is this I see, flaunting in every heart?
What antediluvian vegetation, overrunning the stagnant marshes of the world?
What strong, habitual, deepening strain? — what ominous tendency?

The poets are singing victory through self-fulfilment;
They are singing health and inspiration and happiness through instinct and desire;
They are singing love in terms of sexual love;
They want to be free, unfettered, unopposed.

(But who is singing *renunciation, endurance, forbearance, fortitude, self-control?*
Who is singing the spirit freely given?)

11

Have you not seen the glory of your true freedom?
Belief you had before, imposed by fear, goaded by ignorance, must be the same belief attained by open manly choice;
Spirit you had before, born of a simple faith, must rise through greater, broader faith;
Triumph you had before, born of your spirit bound, must come through spirit boundless, lifted up by will.

For God is close, and science has increased the wonder;
And truth is plain, and truth shall never change;
And wisdom is for sterner, harder conquests;
And freedom is to see what battle joins.

And all is fixed, and firm, and definite, and no denial, and no evasion;
And here you stand, and there your faith may go.

12

I am crazy about this science — I cannot get enough of it;

I would read it any time, instead of the finest romances;
(But I do not forget that it is only a pleasant diversion of the mind.)

I love to know how the world was made — I believe it without a question;
(But I do not forget that a day or a million years makes little difference to eternity;)
I love to know that the stars are so far away — it excites me to think that many of them are still in the opening stages of their formation;
(But I do not forget what lies beyond the stars;)
I love to know of the changes in vegetation through geologic periods — it is just what I want, to round off the marvel of nature;
(But I do not forget what springs within the seed;)
I love to know of the evolution of life — of human life, as well — it is thrilling, inspiring, romantic — it is a far grander conception than the old creation — it means more to the future, than to the past;
(But I do not forget that evolution could no more have come of its own accord, than the old creation.)

And if you succeed in proving that life was struck out of matter by chemical processes, I am prepared to believe that also;

(But I do not forget that the chemical processes could no more have come of their own accord, than the common miracles of everyday life;)

And if you go on, and claim that these chemicals flowed for untold years through the universe, until they happened to form the right combination for the creation of life — that, in this sense, they did create life of their own accord — I agree with you, it is a magnificent idea;

(But I do not forget that the chemicals could not have created themselves out of nothingness — I do not forget that the force which created the chemicals for the creation of life, no matter how long they waited or flowed through the universe before they struck life off, had then, at that earlier and more wonderful creation, the dream of life complete and whole — life as it has evolved, and life as it shall be.)

13

I love to think, and learn, and speculate — I am hungry with curiosity;

(But I do not forget that all of my thought, and knowledge, and speculation, and all that I read, and all that science has dreamed or proved, has absolutely no bearing whatever on any possible explanation

of the majestic, mysterious fact that I am conscious, that I am alive;

And I do not doubt, for a single moment, that the intelligence with which I think, and learn, and speculate — that the will with which I move about — that the consciousness on which my feelings register — that the being which I am — is anything but part of a great miraculous Intelligence, of a Will supreme, of an all-receiving Consciousness, of an omnipresent Being;

And I know, with utter faith, that my spirit, or any spirit, or any spark of life, is nothing but part of a God of perfect love.)

14

I think there must be somewhere a reservoir of spirit, a deep, stupendous basin, its bottom scarcely covered yet,

From which we drink at birth, and into which at death we pour our portion back,

Recording our infinitesimal increment or decrement;

(Not measured by quantity, but by proportional amount — by what we have done with what we had;)

The surface rising and falling, the store of spirit fluctuating, the bottom showing dry spots in times of drouth, hidden again in times of heavy rains;

Fed by the never-failing streams of truth running in
human hearts, sweetened by brooks of tears,
completely clarified from time to time by alchemy
of those great souls burned up in faith, consumed
by their own dreams;
And slowly, surely, rising, rising, through the endless
years,
To brim some day, to overflow, to drown the world, to
flood the universe:
Waters of spirit, rivers of truth, deluge of perfect love!

XXIV

1

THE main idea of all religion in the past has been
Authority;
This man has spoke with God — this is the Creed you
must believe;
This is the Spiritual Kingdom — this your passport —
sign allegiance here.

(And hence the Church, the Institution, embodying
the Authority;
Becoming soon, itself, the Kingdom and the main idea.)

2

I think that the spirit of man is due to fall still lower in
scepticism, before it begins to rise;
I think that humanity has yet to pass through the
Dark Ages of religion, while Individuality com-
pletes its arc of selfishness:
(But so long as the pendulum still swings, it will swing
back again.)

3

I think that, in time, there shall appear a Spiritual Democracy;
I think that there shall be no further use for Church or Creed;
I think that every man shall have his vote in Truth's election;
I think that every man shall be his own Authority;
I think that every man shall speak with God.

4

What is this higher life I sing? — what is this truth? — what is this spirit?
The life is service — the truth is labor — the spirit is love.

5

And what shall be the name of this new religion?
It shall be called *The Religion of Sincerity.*

XXV

I

I KNEW a woman who had found truth's heart;
She was a woman of the sea — of that old sailor's war
with wind and wave;
Her men and boys, she sent away — her husband,
brothers, sons;
She said good-by to them — she saw their sails go
down.

She lived alone, beside the bay — her thoughts were
on her sailors all the time;
She waited patiently for word of them from overseas;
In storms, she held her heart — she shuddered at the
sound of rising wind;
She used to stand at the southern window, looking
across the bay, pressing her face against the
pane;
(It was a brave, benignant face — no tears — quiet
and calm — placid and strong;)

She knew enough to fill her thoughts with fear — she knew too much;
She paid the price of wisdom, truth, and love.

2

They went — they came again, out of the silence of the sea;
Thank God! — thank God! O precious moment of that word;
A little moment, like the rest — she was washing the dishes — she heard a knock — the telegram!
Quick — no demur — with steady hand, she tore it open — with resolute eyes, she read — *arrived all well!*
(O bursting heart! O long year at an end! O voyager nearing home!)

She stood there smiling in the door, to welcome him;
Who could have guessed? — who could have known all that had gone before?
And such strong arms held out — and such a breast to lean upon — and such glad eyes:
(But one by one her sailors failed to come.)

Bravely and quietly she received her terrible news;
A little moment, like the rest — a word, a letter — what would it bring? — what would it say?

Dead? — Dead? — Two months ago? Oh, God! — what was I doing that day?

What may be happening now, off there? I cannot see. *Oh, God — God — God!*

(These were the things she knew.)

3

And this great woman gave herself away, and all she had;

She could not keep possessions — she asked no gift or favor but the chance to love and serve;

She did not ask even for love — she never complained of a lack of consideration shown her — she did not wish or expect consideration to be shown her;

If she had once had dreams of what she wanted, she had put them aside — no one knew what she wanted;

She lived to fulfil the desires of those she loved — and these she sought out diligently;

She gave what she could not spare — her heart went with that gift;

The gift was unfailingly renewed and increased within her;

Her business was to serve — if she was not repaid, then was she most repaid;

She accepted the duty of the hour — if she succeeded
in snatching a single moment for herself, at the
close of the day, it was enough;
She made it hard to serve her in return;
She spoiled every one by the greatness of her love;
She had her true reward — she was used to the utter-
most;
She died with nothing left to leave or give.

4

She brought up many boys besides her own — the sons
of neighbors on the sea;
She guided and controlled them by never questioning —
by the unspoken love they came to feel;
She knew what they were doing — she knew life well;
She was afraid for them — *she must not speak;*
It was her task to make them strong to fight and bear.

They did not dream how subtly they were being led;
She used to groan in the night, lying awake, when she
thought no one could hear;
They used to wonder what could trouble her.

(But looking back in after-years, when she was gone,
they saw what troubled her;

They saw what she had borne — for life had brought
them something of the same;
They saw her eyes again — her searching glance;
They saw her strong, soft face, ready to take and hide
the blows of time;
They saw what she had done for them — they saw that
she had suffered for their sins;
They saw that she had taught them how to live.)

XXVI

I

I HAVE been trying to say what human nature is, and where it stands;
I have been trying to say that the trouble with life lies in convention which makes it imperative to be selfish, in order to eat and live;
(The root strikes deep into the soil of human nature — it is bound to retain its hold for many centuries to come;)
I have been trying to say that if each of us would attend to his spirit, we could bring about the millennium in any social order, and in any day;
(The social order is servant, not master, of the average man;)
I have been trying to say that nothing ails our day, but the growing evil of individual selfishness;
(We need one thing alone — salvation of the soul.)

I have been trying to say that all this peace which we make so much fuss about is perfectly obvious preparation for war;

(So long as we want and have material possessions, we will be fighting either to gain or to hold;)
I have been trying to say that the fighting of wars is our atonement for the making of them in times of peace;
(If ever we fail to fight, until the truth is shown, humanity is doomed;)
I have been trying to say that if we like this peace, and if we enjoy the world as it is, then we are cowards and hypocrites to complain of war.

(Talk not of right and wrong:
The right that we invoke is champion of neither side;
And higher right than we admit fights fiercely on both sides.)

2

I have been trying to say that this particular manifestation of materialism is only another ebb-tide of the spirit — faith blowing off-shore for a while, the flats of selfishness exposed, the snags of scepticism snarling along the rim;
I have been trying to say that the flood-tide is sure to make again, sweet water running in from sea, drowning the reefs, sinking the flats, reaching, embracing the land;

(You can see it out there in the offing, dancing in sunlight, all the time.)

I have been trying to bring convention home to the average man;
I have been trying to bring scepticism home to the average man;
I have been trying to bring war home to the selfishness of the average man, where it belongs.

3

Now turn, and face your God;
Now snatch truth out of the sky, or where it flies;
Reach out, reach out, O Spirit, thought-stung, dream-frenzied, love-amazed;
Reach out, and bring truth down.

Arm for the fight of Self! The battle closes!
Arm not for mortal enemies! A deadlier foe is nigh!

Arm for the secret, never-ending strife! Arm for the hardest war of all!
Arm for the single combat! For all-surrounded! For the last hope! (Have faith! Have courage! Cut your way out! Or, fighting, ever-fighting, die!)

What you have won is nothing! The action scarce begun!
The great campaign to come! (For life or death!
For God! For truth! For perfect love!)
Now! Down with this tough devil! Down with this
desperate, strong old man! (O wild and careless!
Life and time forgotten! Fierce unutterable joy!
O God! O wilder, fiercer, stronger! Aha!—I have
him now!)
To arms! To arms! Spirit to arms, I cry!

4

Return unto simplicity:
I tell you, as sure as anything is sure, this is the way
you have to go;
(And the return is always longer than the going forth.)

I tell you, triumphs lie in store for you, along this way,
Victories finer and cleaner than you have ever won;
I tell you, you shall give up the world, and all you own;
I tell you, you shall own the world and all.

New blood! New blood! Old blood of life renewed!
New dreams! New spirit! Truth in a dream! Love
in a dream! The world on fire!

Look up, look up, my brothers — they shall come;
I tell you, they shall come, as sure as anything is sure:
I tell you more — *I tell you, they are here!*

(The sign embodies what it signifies — the part contains
the whole:
This mother carries generations in her womb.)

5

The slow, laborious march, I see — the pressing forward — the shining faces in the lead;
The plodding rank-and-file, I see — the ignorance of cause and purpose: — (Why must we march? — where are we bound? — I am tired — this place looks good;)
Selfish obedience, I see: — (O we are lost, unless we follow the throng!)
Treacherous moves, I see — infamous projects — leaders bought over — betraying their men — leaving them in the lurch;
Defeat and loss, I see — whole armies being sacrificed — some wandering off — some cut to pieces on the march — some led astray: — (O bravely, sadly led astray!)
Civil contentions, I see — struggling and cursing — sordid disputes — jealousies — animosities — selfish and evil intentions — all weakening the line;

Fresh forces to the front, I see — unheralded reënforcements — swinging in from the by-paths — joining the march — filling the ranks — quickening the step — swelling the song;

Change of commanders, I see — unrest and agitation — young men advanced: — (O fiery young commanders! O new and daring plans! O dreams untried!)

Darkness and light, I see — the gloomy falling night — the breaking day — the night again — the day again;

Hard roads, and easy roads, I see — deep valleys — fearful chasms — stretches of level ground — high hills — wide views: — (O views ahead! O far ahead! O dim and distant way!)

The waving banners, I see — the fluttering pennons — the lifting, streaming flags: — (O flags of truth and falsehood! O flags of faith and doubt! O flags of hope and fear! O highest, purest, brightest, strongest waving flags of love!)

The long, laborious march, I see — the shining faces in the lead — the pressing forward — the ever-pressing forward.

And O, the day of days, I see — the vision rising — standing clear: — (O vision full, impeccable! O

dream secure! O long march justified! O perfect day! O certain day!)

Democracy of the World, I see! Republic of Humanity! The Brotherhood of Man!

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